

REPORT TO CONGRESS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND AMERICAN RED CROSS
ASSESSMENT OF ARMED FORCES EMERGENCY SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction: Senate Report 108-46 (which accompanied the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004) requests that the Department of Defense (DoD), in consultation with the American Red Cross (ARC), provide a report to the Congressional Defense Committees on the status of the ARC's Armed Forces Emergency Services (AFES). Preparing this report provided an opportunity for both organizations to evaluate the AFES mission and role to ensure there is no overlap of services provided by DoD and ARC, and that there is cost effective and efficient delivery of services in support of the military and their families. The evaluation process included independent assessments of AFES by DoD and ARC as well as a joint analysis by both parties that included recommendations for future actions.

Current AFES Services: Over the course of the 20th century, ARC services to military members and their families have evolved and currently include:

- The provision of emergency communications between members of the military and their families
- Deployment of ARC personnel to support troops in theater.
- Community based support for military families (pre and post deployment) through nearly 900 ARC chapters and 108 AFES stations.
- Financial assistance (reimbursed through Military Aid Societies).

ARC Funding Challenges: Since the early 1990s, ARC has faced significant challenges in raising charitable funds to cover the cost of the AFES program. From 1994 through 2003, despite extensive and sustained efforts by ARC national headquarters and chapters, fundraising has not covered the costs associated with the program. Congress appropriated \$106.9 million toward the \$655.6 million in ARC costs for AFES during this time frame; ARC funded the remainder through its general operating funds.

Factors for Change: AFES' historical role as "the military's connection to hometowns" and, in some cases, the only means of emergency communications between troops and families may be obsolete. Instant and affordable communications such as cell phones and the Internet are increasingly available even in many remote sites. Since 1985, DoD policy no longer requires commanders to obtain ARC verification of an emergency before approving emergency leave. Moreover, DoD military and community support programs are more comprehensive and readily available worldwide. In the emerging homeland security environment, the ARC's role in all hazard emergency preparedness and response continues to grow and challenge the organization's resources. In addition, the rebasing of force structure and reduction of infrastructure will continue to impact the need for ARC services to the military.

General Assessment Findings. Based on an analysis of AFES and informal feedback from DoD stakeholders (including the Combatant Commanders, Military Services, National Guard and Reserve Affairs), DoD and ARC have jointly concluded that by eliminating obsolete and/or overlapping services between DoD and the ARC, additional efficiencies are possible, without compromising effectiveness or volunteer opportunities.

- Generally, emergency communication is essential to members of the Armed Forces. It is critical that every family and Service member be confident that they can contact their loved one in case of an emergency. However, there is a need to analyze further the role that AFES plays in the process.
- The Component Commanders value ARC workers who are deployed in theater, but further analysis is needed to determine if such support is still required, and if so, identify possible internal efficiencies.
- DoD family support programs are well equipped to handle active duty personnel and families supported by installations, and Guard and Reserve units provide pre and post deployment briefings for their personnel. ARC support may be more appropriately focused on those Guard and Reserve families who do not already have access to DoD resources.
- The extent of ARC services on DoD installations needs reassessment, given that alternative services exist. Concerning CONUS installations, DOD and the ARC should consider further consolidation of ARC services with local chapters.

Recommended Plan of Action. Leadership within DOD and ARC has agreed to proceed with a plan of action to revise both AFES mission and responsibilities and reduce costs. On-going actions over the next year will include analyzing who is using and benefiting from AFES, evaluating service delivery options to eliminate overlap and duplication, updating DoD and ARC policies and procedures that reflect the revised mission and identifying corresponding funding sources. The report contains specific initiatives and DOD will provide periodic reports, in consultation with the ARC, to the congressional Defense Committees.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Study Objectives. Senate Report 108-46 (which accompanied the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of Fiscal Year 2004) requests that the Department of Defense (DoD), in consultation with the American Red Cross (ARC), provide a report to the congressional Defense Committees on the status of the ARC's Armed Forces Emergency Services (AFES) program. In February 2004, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, reported to the Defense Committees that the report would develop recommendations for the future, based on an analysis of income and expenses related to AFES, and conduct a baseline review of the role of the AFES in relationship to the military mission. The projected completion date was extended from March 30, 2004 to June 30, 2004.¹

The Department, in coordination with the ARC, determined that the requested report provided an opportunity for both organizations to assess what services are now available and develop recommendations for the future. What support the Department requires from the ARC will be determined as an on-going process over the next year, but the initial analysis indicates that DOD and ARC can take action to maintain service levels, avoid duplication, and benefit both organizations. The assessment process included independent assessments of AFES by the ARC and DOD, as well as a joint analysis that included recommendations for future action.

Factors for Change. There is a clear need for DoD and ARC to evaluate the AFES mission and role to ensure cost effective and efficient delivery of services in support of the military and their families on the part of both organizations. AFES' historical role as "the military's connection to hometowns" and in some cases the only means of emergency communications between troops and families may be obsolete. Instant and affordable communications are increasingly available even in many remote sites. Since 1985, DoD policy no longer requires commanders to obtain ARC verification of an emergency before approving emergency leave.² DoD military and community support programs are more comprehensive and readily available worldwide and the ARC's role in all hazard emergency preparedness and response continues to grow. In addition, the rebasing of force structure and reduction of infrastructure will continue to impact the need for ARC services to the military.

¹ Appendix A includes DUSD (MC&FP) interim report letters to Congress dated February 20, 2004 and Report Language.

² Appendix B: DOD and Service policies related to emergency leave.

Congressional Charter. 36 U.S.C. §§ 300102-30011 provides that one of the ARC's purposes is to *"provide volunteer aid in time of war to the sick and wounded of the armed forces, in accordance with the spirit and conditions"* of the Geneva Conventions and *"...to act in matters of voluntary relief and in accordance with the military authorities as a medium of communication between the people of the United States and the armed forces of the United States and to act in those matters between similar national societies of governments of other countries through the International Committee of the ARC and the Government, the people, and the armed forces of the United States..."*

Current AFES Services. Drawing from the experience of Clara Barton on the Civil War battlefields, ARC has continued to provide services to the military and their families during times of peace and war – from nursing in military hospitals around the world to the mobilization of volunteers on the home front. Over the course of the 20th century, ARC services to military members and their families have evolved and currently include:

- The provision of emergency communications between members of the military and their families.
- Deployment of ARC personnel to support troops in Theater.
- Community based support for military families (pre and post deployment) through nearly 900 ARC chapters and 108 AFES stations.
- Financial assistance (reimbursed through Military Aid Societies).

AFES Funding Sources. Since the early 1990s, ARC has faced significant fundraising challenges to cover the costs of the AFES program. Prior to 1994, AFES services were funded solely by charitable contributions and ARC general operating funds. Support for AFES from DoD was provided through in-kind services including transportation, housing and relocation expenses for ARC staff overseas, and office space and equipment. During this period, local United Way affiliates, which at the time provided most of ARC's funding, were cutting back on support for AFES citing that these services to the military were less relevant to the community at large. Charitable donors also expressed the belief that the government should fund these emergency services.³

In 1993, ARC senior leadership actively sought alternative sources of funding, and approached DOD and Congress for appropriations to support AFES. This funding was characterized as "bridge funding" until alternative sources of revenue could be identified and secured. Section 383 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 1995 authorized DOD to provide \$14.5 million to the ARC in Fiscal Years 1995 through 1999. During that same period, ARC senior leadership, with the assistance of a blue-ribbon fundraising cabinet, aggressively sought to generate new funds and identify sustainable revenue streams for AFES. A February 1997 report to the ARC Board of Governors stated that the actions over the previous three years had not produced substantial or sustainable revenue streams.⁴

³ Source: Remarks of ARC President Elizabeth Dole on the opening of the Armed Forces Emergency Service Center, Jefferson Park, VA, November 16, 1998.

⁴ Source: Notes of the American Red Cross, Executive Committee of the Board of Governors, February 22, 1997.

Section 383 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 1995 also directed DoD to conduct an assessment of the alternatives available for obtaining emergency communications services. The report was completed by the Systems Research and Applications Corporation in September 1996, and recommended an immediate need to upgrade software and implementation of the Defense Message System. To facilitate this modernization, ARC received DoD funding (\$7.1 million) to support the establishment of the AFES Call Centers at Jefferson Park, Virginia (relocated in 2003 to Washington, DC) and Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

From 1994 through 2003, fundraising for AFES by ARC national headquarters and the chapters did not cover the costs associated with the program. In addition to supporting AFES through the general operating funds, it was necessary to continue to secure federal funding. During this time period, Congress appropriated \$106.9 million toward the \$655.6 million in ARC costs to provide AFES.

Legislative Vehicle	Appropriated (in millions)	Total AFES Costs (in millions)
FY 1995 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 103-335)	\$14.3	\$71.3
FY 1996 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 104-61)	\$14.5	\$71.1
FY 1997 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 104-208)	\$14.5	\$63.5
FY 1997 Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-18)	\$25.8	\$62.7
FY 1998 Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-56)	\$16.5	\$62.9
FY 2000 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 106-79)	\$5.0	\$64.0
FY 2001 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 106-259)	\$5.0	\$65.8
FY 2002 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 107-117)	\$3.5	\$61.5
FY 2003 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 107-248)	\$2.8	\$67.7
FY 2004 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-87)	\$5.0	\$65.1
Total	\$106.9	\$655.6

*Note: The Federal fiscal year is October 1-September 30; the American ARC fiscal year is July 1-June 30.

Fundraising challenges continued even as the United States entered Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan (October 2001) and currently throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). From Fiscal Years 1994 to 2003 cash contributions to the ARC National Headquarters designated for AFES amounted to \$20.57 million. While chapter reliance on the United Way for fundraising has decreased during the past decade, it is still the primary means of funding AFES services within the community. The decline in United Way funding that began during the late 1980s and early 1990s continues. During the five-year period from Fiscal Years 1998 through 2003, overall United Way funding to ARC (for all services including community disaster preparedness and response, health and safety classes, support for blood collection, and AFES) declined from \$204.8 million to \$174.9 million, a 14.6 percent decrease.

Despite extensive and sustained efforts to increase the visibility of AFES and generate media interest and advertising to support fundraising during OEF/OIF, public support has remained tepid. Prior to combat operations, ARC took out print, television and

radio ads, including a Public Support Announcement by President and CEO Marsha Johnson Evans, RADM (Ret). Only \$700,000 was raised in direct response to \$3.0 million of high-quality donated media. In addition, a national level dedicated fundraising campaign was undertaken to support AFES during major combat operations of OIF (March 2003-May 2003). In response, \$5.5 million was generated for AFES, \$5.0 million of which came from a single foundation. (The next largest gift was a corporate donation of \$75,000 and the remainder was in small gifts from individuals.) There was also extensive outreach to federal employees through the 2003 Combined Federal Campaign, resulting in \$5.59 million being designated to ARC for AFES. A significant portion of this funding was from donors who were members of the military.

Market research continues to indicate that support for AFES is lacking due to the public's continued belief that the federal government should be the funding source for emergency communications services for the military and unfamiliarity with the role that ARC plays in support of the military.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY ARMED FORCES EMERGENCY SERVICES OF ARC

The services provided by the ARC through the AFES program rely on technology that enables ARC caseworkers, whether located at the Call Center, a local ARC chapter or overseas, to work interactively to verify emergency circumstances and subsequently relay the results to military commanders, Service members, and their families. AFES also accesses the Defense Message System to send messages directly to military units where there is no local ARC presence, including ships at sea and remotely deployed units. In addition, AFES uses the DoOD Employee Interactive Data System as the primary personnel locator for most DoD employees, as well as all active duty, Guard, Reserve, and retired Service members.

The ARC network includes five major components: two dedicated call centers, Red Cross workers deployed with troops in Theater, Red Cross stations located on military installations, Red Cross chapters in local communities, and support provided by the national headquarters. Each is discussed below.

Emergency Call Centers. With a staff of approximately 150 ARC personnel, two call centers located in Ft. Sill, OK and Washington DC operate worldwide, 24/7, 365 days a year, linking with ARC stations and chapters to provide emergency message delivery, notification, and verification services. Serving only military personnel and families, these call centers also provide answers to emergency related public inquiries, provide information and referral services, and help families locate and communicate with Service members. Annual operating costs are approximately \$10 million per year. Fiscal Year 2003 usage data is as follows:

Service	# of Calls	% of Usage
USA	117,207	56%
USN	43,370	21%

USAF	23,208	11%
USMC	23,083	11%
USCG	1,149	1%
Total	208,017	100%

ARC Chapters Nationwide. Nearly 900 chapters provide services to military families in local communities throughout the United States. Local chapters report approximately \$34 million was spent in support of military related services in local communities in Fiscal Year 2003. Services include emergency communication, information and referral, and coordination for financial assistance. Chapter staffs are essential to verification of messages involving family emergency situations by confirming circumstances with local physicians, hospitals, and mortuaries. ARC chapters nationwide brief departing Service members and their families on how the ARC can help during deployments. For example, the “*Get to Know Us Before You Need Us Program*” reaches those not located near military installations, provides the information necessary in times of crisis, and informs military members of services, including military related counseling and social services, that are available in their communities. Chapters also reach out to families who lose loved ones during combat. After the casualty office officially notifies families of their loss, the families are contacted by the chapter and offer sympathy, support, and assistance for travel under the casualty assistance program.

Deployed ARC Workers in Theater. When requested by the Combatant Commander, ARC deploys ARC personnel in theater when troop strength is at or above brigade-size (approximately 3,000 personnel). When deployed, the staff’s primary function is to provide 24/7 emergency communications between deployed Service members and their families back home. They ensure delivery of emergency messages, assist Service members with plans for emergency leave, including financial assistance if needed, and ensure the Service member understands how to access the ARC network if needed while at home. When not supporting emergency messaging, the staff also assists with improving the quality of life in theater by providing coffee, water, snacks, games, books, videos, and other items sent to the troops by the American public, ARC chapters, and other organizations.

The number of ARC personnel on the ground in theater at any one time currently ranges from ten to 19 people. In Fiscal Year 2003, a total of 52 ARC staff were deployed for four to six months within the Central Command’s area of responsibility, delivering or facilitating the transmission of approximately 37,000 messages. Of note, as of June 24, 2004, ten staff were deployed in Iraq and while the Joint Security Directorate does not require AFES staff to stay in secure areas, it is prudent that the ARC directives to staff parallel the military’s movement and restrictions. Such restrictions often impact their ability to deliver emergency messages. ARC funds the personnel costs estimated at \$3.5 million in Fiscal Year 2003. Army, as executive agent for the deployed staff program, funds travel and transportation, billeting and dining, uniform and equipment and other related administrative and logistic expenses.

ARC Stations on Military Installations. The national headquarters currently employs approximately 180 personnel to staff ARC stations located on 108 DoD

installations: 48 are located in the Continental United States (CONUS) and 60 are located Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS). Local chapters also employ staff to support these on-station operations. The station staff serves as the liaison with military authorities and agencies on the installation. The ARC reports the Fiscal Year 2003 cost to operate on board military installations at \$17 million. This excludes the in-kind support provided by DoD, which includes facilities, utilities, communications, relocation and transportation expenses for OCONUS, and other indirect expenses.

CONUS Stations. Staff at CONUS locations deliver emergency communication messages to Service members assigned to their installation during normal business hours (typically 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). They serve as the primary point of contact with the command, provide volunteer opportunities, and support public relations, casework, and fundraising efforts. ARC staff provides briefings for newcomers, pre-deployment, and family support groups. CONUS stations coordinate with the local chapters that provide health, safety, and disaster training, blood collection, and fundraising efforts.

OCONUS Stations. OCONUS ARC staff provides similar services as CONUS ARC staff, except that they provide 24/7 emergency communications and case management services, and, since there are no local chapters, they deliver health, safety, and disaster training. OCONUS staffs also liaise with the host country Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.

National Headquarters Client Services Division. The national headquarters Client Services Division develops national training programs and case management directives, and provides local units with case consultation and quality assurance. This division is also responsible for volunteer programs in VA hospitals and the Board of Veteran's Appeals (where former and retired Service members, through chapters and stations, can initiate claims or request changes in VA compensation).

OVERVIEW OF RELATED MILITARY AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY DOD

Since the early 1980's, the Department has increasingly expanded program support to active duty and military families. Recent strategies have also focused on the needs of the two-thirds of military families living off-installation and the Reserve Components. Programs continue to evolve to meet the expressed needs and reflect business-based approaches, taking advantage of technology. Today, the Department has a wide, and growing array of QoL policies, services, and programs that recognize the challenges and sacrifices of military life. They are depicted below.



The following highlights those programs, which are especially germane in relationship to AFES' role in communications, family support, and deployment support in theater. It is important to evaluate the total array of programs provided by both DoD and ARC to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery systems.

Family Centers. Located on board military installations, these professionally staffed centers provide a variety of programs to serve single and married Service members and families. Typical programs include information and referral, deployment and mobilization support, volunteer opportunities, life skills education, new parent support programs, crisis intervention and disaster preparedness, relocation assistance, transition assistance, spouse employment programs, free computer and Internet access, and personal financial management.

Military OneSource. The Department has leveraged technology to deliver information and referral services to active duty and reserve Service members and their families from wherever they are in the world, not just when located near a military installation. Military OneSource delivers a customized approach and is available 24/7, 365 days a year, from any place, at any time, tailoring services, and maintaining case files for individuals and individual families. By calling the 1-800 telephone number, which is always answered live, never by a machine, military families can obtain information on the following services:

*Access to Counseling
Education*

*Deployment & Reunion
Parenting and Child Care*

*Military Life
Financial*

Health
Grief and Loss
Addiction & Recovery
Everyday Issues

Midlife & Retirement
Legal
Taking Care of Self
Older Adults

Relocation
Emotional Well-being
Work and Career

Of particular importance to families separated by deployment, help is available for everyday issues such as home repairs, pet care, and major purchases. Military OneSource augments and does not duplicate the installation Family Centers. Each of the military Services will have fully implemented this service by the end of Fiscal Year 2004.

Family Assistance Counseling/On Call Counseling. Building upon Military OneSource, active duty and Reservists and their families can call the toll-free number and schedule counseling from a licensed counselor within their immediate geographic area. This counseling includes work-life issues such as parent and child communications, deployment stress, financial pressures, and single parenting, etc. On average, counseling consists of six pre-paid sessions. This program is outside of counseling services already covered by TRICARE, and those provided by Navy Fleet and Family Support Programs. Specifically designed to address the demands of the current high PERSTEMPO and OPTEMPO, these services involve early intervention to preclude the development of more serious problems requiring medical treatment.

Financial Readiness Campaign. In May 2003, the Department initiated a Financial Readiness Campaign focused on junior enlisted Service members and their spouses to draw attention to the importance of personal finance in sustaining personal and family readiness. The campaign is a partnership with 26 other government agencies and non-profit organizations involved in financial literacy programs for the general public. This program supplements other financial management programs provided by installation Family Support Centers and military aid societies. The intent is to educate individuals on the importance of saving to build long-term wealth and prepare for the inevitable emergencies.

Deployment Support. The demands typical of a career in the Armed Forces include geographic mobility, residence in foreign countries, risk of injury or death, and frequent separation of families. Each of the Services has built a highly responsive family support system that incorporates the best resources available to help cope with the demands of military life. Since October 2002, the Joint Family Readiness Working Group has pushed to share best practices to increase support beyond Service and component boundaries. The Military Services' Family Centers and unit-based support programs provide the key in-depth continuous support to families of those deployed, including parents and extended family members. Support is now provided to Guard and Reserve families and others not located near a military installation, including the establishment of approximately 400 National Guard Family Assistance Centers. Unit Family Readiness Groups, staffed by volunteers, actively maintain communication with families in outlying areas through newsletters, Web sites, and direct communication to enhance unit-to-family communication. Deployment support includes three major phases (mobilization, deployment, and return and reunion).

Mobilization phase. Sustained communication networks provide information resources from the time a member enters the Service, not just a sudden burst of information prior to deployment. Outreach focuses on the “extended family” and the need to educate Service members on their responsibility to provide their parents, siblings, and significant others with contact information in case of an emergency and where they can obtain accurate information during the Service members’ absence. Policy requires that leadership recognize the importance of communication with families during deployment.

Deployment phase. During deployment, family support programs are available to address the emotional stress associated with “going it alone.” Services include the wide range of Family Center services, Military OneSource, extensive Web-based information, respite child care, and youth programs. Family Readiness Centers stockpile resources such as books, videos, and deployment kits for easy distribution during deployments.

Return & Reunion Phase. Adjusting to changes that occur in the family dynamics during deployment is stressful. Each Service is committed to ensure 100 percent of their Service members receive return and reunion preparation and programs are tailored to meet specific Service needs.

- The Army’s new “Deployment Cycle Support” includes formal classes, discussions, and psychological assessments. It begins in-Theater and is sustained at the home base. Additionally, Army maintains a Web site to provide consolidated reference tools to assist commanders, Soldiers, and families with reunion issues.
- The Navy has routinely provided post-deployment programs through the Fleet and Family Support Centers. Services include shipboard training while transiting home, workshops for family members, increased information and referral, priority counseling services, and extended training for Navy Ombudsmen, who are the commanding officer’s primary communication link between the deployed command and families back home.
- The Marine Corps has a standardized program, which includes a mandatory warrior transition brief for returning Marines, a guidebook for Marines and families, and briefs provided by their Marine Corps and Community Services, designed for caregivers and spouses.
- Air Force offers a variety of deployment briefings, one-on-one sessions, classes, and workshops. A collaborative team of installation level agencies (e.g., family support, chaplains, family advocacy, etc) makes up an integrated delivery system. The Key Spouse Program is new and very active in the Reserves.
- The National Guard’s State Family Program Coordinators are the primary resource in providing family readiness support to commanders, Soldiers, Airmen, and families. Due to the geographic dispersion of families and the distance from military installations, these coordinators reach out to community resources (including ARC) to provide the needed services. The Army National Guard operates about 400 Family Assistance Centers in all

states and territories. They are regionally based and publicized as the primary entry point for service and assistance for any Guard and Reserve family member who may need help during the deployment cycle.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR). In addition to significant contractor support, the Military Services have established a wide array of support services to meet the need of those assigned to installations and deployed forces. This section focuses on deployment support provided in Southwest Asia during Fiscal Year 2003.

- Army Community Family Support Center (CFSC) coordinated with Coalition Forces Land Component Command and Combined Task Force –7 for MWR requirements. In Fiscal Year 2003, \$13.5 million in MWR equipment, supplies and services were delivered to Iraq and Kuwait. Additionally, seven MWR positions are deployed to command level organizations to support MWR specialists located at various units in Theater.
- Army CFSC purchased equipment and commercial site licenses for 32 Internet cafés (with 20 computer stations in each café) for facilities in Iraq. The cafes provide free access to email, distance learning, and Internet services at every major troop site in Iraq.
- CFSC purchased equipment to establish fitness and recreation facilities at 25 large and 22 small sites in Iraq, and four major and five remote locations in Afghanistan. The MWR facilities include movie theaters with free popcorn, electronic game stations, traditional board games, ping-pong, and paperback libraries. Fitness equipment includes cardiovascular, strength-training, and assorted free-weight equipment.
- The Army sends 800 paperback book kits to units in SWA each month. Kits include new audio books, magazines, music CDs, and copies of the Army Times.
- Air Force Services consistently deploy high numbers of troops to overseas locations providing hot meals, comfortable lodging, fitness center, and recreation programs to Service members. Currently, 520 Air Force Services troops are deployed to 13 sites. Last year, at the peak, over 1,600 active duty Air Force personnel were deployed.
- Armed Forces Entertainment continues to provide high quality entertainment to troops deployed overseas; in Fiscal Year 2003 they supported 1,212 shows.
- The Navy distributed over \$16.5 million in physical fitness equipment to the fleet (20,951 strength equipment pieces, 3,164 cardio pieces and 144,936 pieces of recreation and sports equipment). Additional fleet recreation support includes free movies, multi media learning centers (free Internet), and ticket and tour rebates. Civilian recreation and fitness specialists accompany larger ships to support fleet recreation and fitness programs.
- Four Marine Officers have been designated as MWR Officers with responsibility/oversight at each of the four large Marine camps. Services include sports and recreation programs, and operation of fitness/recreation facilities and Internet cafés. Additional library resources, and \$700,000 in recreation, fitness, and movie theater equipment were provided to augment the support provided by the Army

Field Exchanges. The Armed Services Exchanges have established tactical field exchanges, exchange supported/unit run field exchanges, and ships' stores operating in the OEF/OIF Theaters. Services include phone call centers, satellite phones, Internet cafes, video films, laundry and tailoring, photo development, health and beauty products, barber and beauty shops, vending and amusement machines, food and beverages, and name brand fast food operations. Services vary by location depending upon troop strength and unit mission requirements.

Telecommunications. As Theater conditions permit, the Department has increased access to e-mail, telephone, calling centers, and satellite phone services provided through the Defense Switched Network (DSN), Health, Morale and Welfare (HMW) calls and unofficial telecommunications furnished by the Armed Services exchanges. On average, over 50,000 HMW calls are made each day using DSN at no cost to the caller. An equal number of calls are made over "unofficial lines" where members pay for the calls. Of note, the Fiscal Year 2004 NDAA requires that prepaid phone cards, or an equivalent telecommunications benefit be provided at no cost to those serving in OEF/OIF. The benefit cannot exceed \$40 a month or 120 calling minutes. The Secretary of Defense can accept donations to defray costs, which have currently approached \$1 million a month.

Web Sites. The Department makes maximum use of Web sites to communicate important information to families affected by deployment and family separation. Each of the Military Services, National Guard, and the office of Reserve Affairs have established comprehensive and effective Web sites to support troops and families as well. The most popular of these pages attract over two million hits per quarter. DoD also employs other technologies, such as e-mail to help maintain contact between deployed Service members and their families. The goal is to ensure that every family of a deployed Service member has direct access to the support and services they need.

The new "Military Homefront" Web-portal will become the central, up-to-date source for Service members and families to obtain information about all DoD QoL services, whether they are planning a permanent change of station move, dealing with deployments and family separations, or looking for the specials at the commissary and exchange stores. The site will contain not only breaking news, but also quick links to SITES4 (a comprehensive military community information database), to Military OneSource, and other sites supporting military families.

STUDY PROCESS AND GENERAL FINDINGS

The American Red Cross and Department of Defense have a long history of cooperation in providing services to members of America's military and their families during times of war. Today, the roles continue to evolve. With the advent of cell phones and global e-mail, Service members are learning of emergencies back home long before they hear of it from the Red Cross. Also, since 1985 DoD policy no longer requires commanders to wait for ARC verification of the emergency before letting the Service person go home on leave. All

Services have subsequently implemented this policy. Commanders can approve the emergency leave upon request. If they have reason to doubt the validity of the request, they may request assistance from the nearest military activity closest to the emergency, or they have the option to use ARC verification. Additionally, while the Department is providing better support for personnel who do not have access to programs provided by the installation, there is still a real need right now for ARC to support families whose loved ones are Reservists or in the National Guard located throughout the country and don't have a built in support network. The ARC has nearly 900 chapters nationwide with volunteers who are helping to provide this support in many different ways.

The Department convened a DoD working group consisting of representatives from the Joint Staff, Services, National Guard, and Reserve Affairs to determine how best to initially assess the perceived value of AFES to the military mission. The representatives informally polled their stakeholders; briefly describing what AFES provides and asked them what AFES services they believed were essential, desirable, or not required. There was no discussion of the cost to provide such services, or alternatives that may exist, as the intent was to get broad base feedback on the perceived need, regardless of cost. Sources of feedback varied. The National Guard and Reserve Affairs solicited feedback from their family support networks through e-mails and Web surveys. The Services canvassed their family support and/or installation management staff, and the Joint staff feedback represented initial views of the Combatant Commanders.

While feedback was unofficial and informal, analysis of DoD feedback and AFES assessment provided by the ARC provided a plan of action upon which to proceed. Efficiencies, without compromising effectiveness or volunteer opportunities, are possible.

- In general, emergency communication is essential across the Armed Forces. It is critical that every family and Service member be confident they will be able to contact their loved one in case of an emergency. However, there is a need to further analyze the role that AFES plays in the process, especially with the increasing availability of instant communications and the fact that the Department no longer requires ARC verification before approving emergency leave. While this DoD policy has been in effect since 1985, it is not well understood throughout the military chain of command, or by ARC personnel.
- The Combatant Commanders value ARC workers who are deployed to support troops in theater, but further analysis is needed to determine if such support is still required, and if so, identify possible internal efficiencies.
- DoD family support programs are well equipped to handle active duty personnel and families supported by installations. ARC support may be more appropriately focused on those Guard and Reserve families who do not already have access to DoD resources.
- The extent of ARC services on DoD installations needs refining as alternative services exist, and in the case of CONUS installations, further consolidation with the local ARC chapters needs to be considered.

RECOMMENDED PLAN OF ACTION

Leadership within the Department of Defense and the American Red Cross have agreed to proceed with the following plan of action to revise the AFES mission and responsibilities and reduce costs. Periodic status reports will be provided to the Chairmen of the congressional Defense Committees. On-going actions will include further analysis to better define who is using and benefiting from AFES, continued evaluation of service delivery options to eliminate overlap and duplication, update of DoD and ARC policies and procedures that reflect the revised mission and responsibilities, and identification of corresponding funding sources. Specific initiatives include:

- Evaluate and eliminate duplication of services provided by AFES Call Centers and DoD Military and Community and Family Support programs. Examples include information and referral services, counseling, etc.
- Consider and implement technology alternatives.
- Communicate DoD policy that commanders are authorized to approve emergency leave without requiring ARC verification and determine what DoD subsequently requires from the ARC with regard to emergency messaging (e.g., message content and the time messages need to be delivered by). Determine impact on AFES call center operations and ARC chapters (e.g., the need to operate 24/7).
- Continue AFES support deployed in OEF/OIF while conducting a comprehensive assessment of future requirements, based on feedback from combatant commanders and military Service Chiefs that address policy and communication technology changes, and overall support provided in theater.
- Improve coordination between the ARC, DoD organizations, and National Guard state level Family Program Directors and Reserve Family Program Managers to integrate rather than duplicate efforts. Review and determine the role for ARC in family support programs (including deployment briefings) to family members who do not currently have access to DoD programs. These include parents and siblings of military personnel and Guard and Reserve unit members.
- Review existing memoranda of understanding between the ARC and military aid societies to determine the actual requirement and again, focus on Guard and Reserve families not supported by an installation.
- Integrate and consolidate remaining CONUS ARC stations with local ARC chapters where populations and/or need for services are low. This will reduce redundancy and operating costs to both the ARC and DoD installation commanders.
- Consider the on-going need for OCONUS stations in conjunction with future rebasing strategies. For example, there are currently 17 ARC stations in Germany, eight in Korea, and three in England (including London). In addition, evaluate other service delivery options to provide required services such as mobile training units to provide disaster, health and safety programs, train-the-trainer programs, etc. These cost effective alternatives could reduce infrastructure costs for both organizations.
- Determine appropriate funding sources as DoD and ARC revise the AFES mission and identify the need for ARC services for military personnel and families.